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MRS CHESTERTON. Dobbs!
LUCY. Dobbs!
PATERNOSTER. Dobbs! *(Dragging in the Squire, & pointing to Dobbs.)*

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MAJOR.—Blue military frock coat, blue trousers with gold lace stripe, cap.

PATERNOSTER.—Brown dress coat, large gilt buttons, plaid trousers, and vest.

DOBBS.—Fashionable black frock coat, dark blue trousers, white vest.

JOHN.—Livery frock coat, striped vest, breeches, top boots.

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LUCY.—White muslin morning dress.

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JOHN DOBBS.

SCENE.—*A handsomely furnished Apartment in the House of* SQUIRE FALLOWFIELD—*Door* C., *looking on to a lawn—Door,* L.H.—*Window,* R.H.—*A Piano Forte,* L.H., *and a music stool—Table,* R.H. *at back, on which are books, newspapers, &c—Sofa,* 2 E.R.H., *on which is work-basket, and Berlin patterns—Chair,* R.H.—*Three chairs at back.*

SQUIRE FALLOWFIELD *in shooting costume, belt and double-barrelled gun* C.D., *looking* R.H.—LUCY *is at the Piano*—MAJOR FRANKMAN *is at the* R. *of Piano, attending to* LUCY—MRS. CHESTERTON *seated on the sofa, and* PATERNOSTER *seated in a chair before* MRS. CHESTERTON, *and holding a skein of silk, which she is winding.*

SQUIRE. (*whistling* R.C.) Here—Ponto—Juno—come back! Zounds! there they go, over the tulip-beds—so I think the best thing I can do is to follow them. Come, Frankman—what say you to a pop at the partridges, eh?

MAJOR. (L.) Why——

LUCY. (L.) You wouldn't be so ung[illegible] as to run away, Major?

MAJOR. Not I, indeed. Squire, if I had only this excuse for not attending you, (*bowing to* LUCY) which you must acknowledge a very fair one—you would, I am sure, consider it sufficient; but I have another, which must be attended to—namely my duty; and as that duty happens to call me to head quarters at Canterbury, why to head quarters at Canterbury I must go.

SQUIRE. Then I must beat up for recruits elsewhere. Paternoster! (PATERNOSTER *takes no notice*) Paternoster! you'll come with me? (*poking* PATERNOSTER *with his gun*)

PATER. (R. *turning round, and finding the muzzle of the gun close to his face*) Don't! I wish you wouldn't! (*lifting up his hands, and entangling the silk which he is holding*)

MRS. C. (R.) Dear, dear—how clumsy you are, Mr. Paternoster!

PATER. I beg pardon——

SQUIRE. Ha, ha, ha!

PATER. Yes, it's all very well for *you* to laugh—you've got hold of the right end of the gun—but I beg to observe, that when a gentle

man hears himself appealed to, and, turning his head round, finds his nose within half an inch of the muzzle of a gun—and that gun, a gun with *two* barrels—the effect is infinitely more startling than agreeable.

SQUIRE. Why, zounds, man, it isn't loaded!

PATER. What of that? Do you suppose a gun can't go off without being loaded? That notion's exploded long ago!

SQUIRE. Egad, it would rather astonish me if it did!

PATER. You? You mean it would rather astonish *me!*

MRS. C. (*to* PATERNOSTER) A little higher, if you please!

PATER. Beg pardon. (*raising his arms with evident discomfort to himself*)

SQUIRE. Then you won't come?

PATER. Certainly not. I'm too agreeably employed. I repeat, I'm too agreeably employed! (*looking tenderly at* MRS. C.)

MRS. C. A little higher!

PATER. Beg pardon. (*raising his arms again, &c.,*) Besides, I don't pretend to call myself a sporting character. I don't like guns, and I don't like dogs—and I don't like partridges—except in their natural state, nicely browned, with plenty of bread sauce. I *have* been out shooting several times in my life, but I gave it up, because there was no variety in it.

SQUIRE. No variety? Come, come——

PATER. Not a bit! I found it consisted of the same thing over and over again—namely, firing my gun at something or other, and missing the something or other that I fired my gun *at!*

SQUIRE. Why, zounds, man, it was only the other day that you told me you thought nothing of bringing down a brace of pheasants at a time!

PATER. No more I did! I used to bring them down from Leadenhall Market!

MRS. C. (*to* PATER) A *leetle* higher!

PATER. Beg pardon. (*raising his hands, &c., &c.*)

MRS. C. It's nearly done!

PATER. (*aside*) So am I!

MRS. C. There! (*rises*) I'm afraid your gallantry has given you a deal of trouble.

PATER. Not at all. (*rises*) I'm not conscious of any unpleasant results, as yet, except a slight attack of pins and needles. (*rubbing his arms*) But what is there I would not undergo to please you? (*looking tenderly at* MRS. CHESTERTON.)

SQUIRE. (L. *to* MRS. C.) Come, Mary, surely Paternoster's gallantry deserves some reward?

PATER. (C. *to* MRS. C.) You hear what your venerable sire says? I hope you do—because it isn't very often he says anything worth hearing. And after all, I don't ask much. I only want you to marry me. You know I've been dying for you the last six months.

MRS. C. (R. *smiling*) Yet you don't look *much* the worse for it.

PATER. No—the mischief is all internal. You wouldn't believe it to look at me—but I feel I'm gradually wasting away! I never should eat anything at all, if it wasn't for the appearance of the thing.

And you, Mr. Fallowfield, instead of going out, and bringing down partridges, stop at home, and see if you can't bag a son-in-law!

SQUIRE. (L.) Hark ye, Paternoster, I make it a point never to interfere with my girls in these matters. I say to them, "Choose for yourselves." I said so to Mary before she married your late cousin, Tom Chesterton—I say so to her again now she's a widow: and I say so to my little Lucy, too, who hears every word I say plainly enough, though she does pretend to be absorbed in her music.

LUCY. (*rising hastily*) Lor, pa! why should I listen to anything so perfectly uninteresting? (*crosses behind to* MRS. C. *aside to her*) I say, Mary, how sensibly papa does talk upon certain subjects!

Enter JOHN, *with letters*, C.D.

JOHN. (*to* SQUIRE, *and giving letters*) Your letters, sir! (*crosses to the* MAJOR) Please your honour, an Orderly has just ridden up to the Park Lodge with this letter for your honour.

MAJ. (*taking letter*) Thank you. Is my horse ready?

JOHN. Quite ready, your honour. (*retires up to* C.D.)

MAJ. (*after reading letter*) I find I must ride over to Canterbury immediately. (*crosses to* R. *and takes his cap from table, and kissing* LUCY'S *hand.*) Ladies, good morning—Squire, Mr. Paternoster, good morning!

SQUIRE. Good morning, Major!

MAJOR *bows, and exit* C.D.L.H.

PATER. (C. *bowing very low*) Good morning, Major!

JOHN. (*about to follow* MAJOR—*stops, and says to* MRS. CHESTERTON) Oh, I beg pardon, ma'am, there's a box just come by the London coach for you, ma'am.

MRS. C. A box for me, John? The last new fashions, I dare say!

LUCY. The last new opera, I hope! Bring it in, John. Make haste!

JOHN. Yes, miss, bring it in directly.

Exit C.D.

SQUIRE. (*after reading a letter*) Wheugh! Of all the obstinate, determined, contumacious, conceited, persevering, impertinent——I stop for want of adjectives!

OMNES What *is* the matter?

SQUIRE. I'm almost choking—but whether it's with laughter or indignation, I can't exactly tell. This letter is the modest production of a modest gentleman, who condescends to do the united family of the Fallowfields the infinite honour of soliciting their acquaintance.

LUCY. Who is he—who is he?

SQUIRE. Ask your sister, Mary. (*gives the letter to* MRS. CHESTERTON.)

MRS. C. (*reading*) "I have the honour to be, your most obedient servant"—Can it be possible?—"John Dobbs!'

OMNES. John Dobbs!

PATER. Dobbs! What, the same Dobbs—the identical Dobbs, who had the presumption to aspire to your hand before you married cousin Chesterton?

MRS. C. Yes—and whose absurd pretensions I twice treated with the contempt they deserved—refusing even to see him.

SQUIRE. Well, he's returned to the attack—and though he does not mention your name, Mary, depend upon it, he has quite made up his mind to marry you, whether you will or not! Ha, ha, ha!

MRS. C. Ha, ha, ha!

PATER. Ha, ha, ha! The fellow's in the agricultural line—a sort of farmer—isn't he?

SQUIRE. Yes—his father, old Dobbs, held a small farm of mine for many years—and as young John, the aforesaid old Dobbs's son, seemed rather above the common run of ploughboys and clodhoppers, the silly old man immediately set him down as a genius, sent him to school—in short, tried to make him a gentleman!

PATER. Just what my father tried to do with me—but I defied him! The consequence is, that instead of being an idle gentleman with five hundred a year, I'm an active button manufacturer with as many thousands!

SQUIRE. Well, some time ago I was simpleton enough to allow myself to be bit by the mania of speculation, and soon got into such a rabid state that I found myself seriously involved. I determined to sell part of my estate, and called my tenants together, to apprise them of my intentions. Old Dobbs arrived somewhat earlier than the rest, and requested to speak with me. You may imagine my surprise, when the old fellow—pulling a greasy canvas bag out of his breeches pocket—says to me, "Squire, here be a tightish lump of money at your service, and what is more, I never wish to see a farthing of it again, if you'll only be agreeable to a bit of a condition I'm going to make." "What is it, Dobbs?" said I. "Why, Squire," said he—"my son John has taken a liking to your daughter, Miss Mary—and if you haven't any objection to the match, I'm sure I haven't." I heard no more—but giving way to my indignation, turned old Dobbs and his money out of the house! Since that time I have heard no more of him, or his son, young John, and his absurd pretentions; and I thought the young gentleman had quite left the neighbourhood—confound the fellow!

MRS. C. Now, don't annoy yourself, papa——

LUCY. Mary and I will put our heads together, and write him such a letter!

PATER. Do! Give it young Dobbs well! Don't leave Dobbs, junior, a leg to stand on!

Enter JOHN, C.D.L.H. *with a small box.*

JOHN. Here is the box, ma'am! (*laying it on the table, and exit* C.D.)

LUCY. (R.L.) Now, then——Oh, Mary, look here! (*taking out a paper packet, and reading*) "To Mrs Chesterton" What can it be? Have I your permission? Ha, ha! (*opens paper, and shews a red morocco case—she opens it*) Oh!

MRS. C. (R. *looking*) Ah!

SQUIRE. (L., *looking*) Oh!

PATER. (C.) May I venture to enquire the cause of all this

Ah-oh-ing---to say nothing of the Oh-ha-ing?

LUCY. A portrait of Mary! Look, Mr. Paternoster---isn't it like her?

SQUIRE. Absolute identity!

MRS. C. My very self!

PATER. Well, I can't say I think so. To be sure, there's no mistaking the eyes---and nose---and mouth---and so on, but I solemnly declare I never should have recognized the bonnet! I decidedly object to the bonnet!

MRS. C. Well, this is certainly most gallant---and from a stranger, too! (LUCY *and the* SQUIRE *retire up to piano.*)

PATER. A stranger!

MRS. C. Yes, a young gentleman---an artist, I presume,—with whom I danced one or two quadrilles at our County Ball last week.

PATER. One or two quadrilles? (*severely*) Perhaps one or three?

MRS. C. No matter! He requested that I would permit him to paint my portrait---from memory!

PATER. From memory! Well, he must have looked at you pretty hard! He must have regularly rivetted you with his orbs---I say, with his orbs! A *young* painter, too? If he'd been one of the old Masters, I shouldn't so much have cared---but I really don't know a more conceited, self-sufficient class of the community than these young painters---plumbers and glaziers——

MRS. C. An artist, if you please, Sir——

PATER. Of course---they're all artists!

MRS. C. I never met a more gentlemanly person.

PATER. That's right, Mrs.C.---overwhelm him with praises! Why not call him a Sir Thomas Corregio or a Sir Joshua Vandyke, at once? (*crosses to* L.H.)

MRS. C. Pshaw!

SQUIRE. Holloa! a lover's quarrel? I'm off! (LUCY *crosses to* R.H.)

LUCY. Then Mary and I will remain here and prepare an answer to Mr. John Dobbs's letter.

MRS. C. The best thing we can do, since the gentlemen are leaving us. (*pointedly to* PATERNOSTER) Both the gentlemen——

LUCY. Both the gentlemen——

PATER. Oh—ah! That's as much as to tell me to——

SQUIRE. (*coming down, and seizing hold of* PATERNOSTER'S *left arm*) Come, along, Paternoster! (*drags him off*, C.D.L.H.)

MRS. C. Ha, ha, ha.

LUCY. Ha, ha, ha! Sister of mine, you certainly do treat poor Mr. Paternoster very cruelly.

MRS. C. Surely not worse than Mr. Paternoster treats me. He offers me the choice of two evils—his hand in marriage, or an action at law!

LUCY. For the recovery of the larger portion of his cousin Chesterton's property—which, although at present enjoyed by his youthful widow, Mr. Paternoster maintains justly belongs to himself. And yet I firmly believe Mr. Paternoster loves you sincerely.

MRS. C. If I was not sure of it, do you think I should tease him in every way that I possibly can? Ha, ha!

LUCY. Such, for instance, as showing him this portrait of yourself! By the bye, Mary, who is your *young* friend?

MRS. C. He has a name, I presume, but I am ignorant of it. All that I do know is, that during our last quadrille he requested permission to paint my portrait.

LUCY. Which permission you granted?

MRS. C. Merely upon the principle that talent ought to be encouraged.

LUCY. I am delighted to hear you say so—for do you know, Mary—during my last visit to our dear old aunt, at Bath, I met a gentleman—a young gentleman, who wrote the sweetest ballads, set them to the sweetest music, and sang them in the sweetest style—well, he begged I would permit him to dedicate his last composition to me.

MRS. C. Of course you declined?

LUCY. Not I, indeed! Why shouldn't I encourage talent as well as you? But now, Mary, what is to be done with this dreadful Mr. John Dobbs? Perhaps, Mary, as you won't have him,—he's changed his mind, and means to pop to *me!* Ha, ha! Poor Major Frankman! h'ed be a second Othello! Ha, ha!

MRS. C. If Mr. Dobbs should do so, which, (*conceitedly*) I confess I do not think very likely—of course you would crush his importunities, as I did.

LUCY. Lor, sister! I couldn't crush the young man. Besides, after all, there would be no very great crime in his wanting to marry me.

MRS. C. Remember my experience, Lucy. It was in a great measure to avoid Mr. John Dobbs's persecution that I married Mr. Chesterton. No sooner had I become a widow than this Dobbs—this persevering tormentor of mine—who, it appears, had in a fit of despair enlisted into a marching regiment—appeared once more in the field! He proposed to me again—he, Dobbs! at most a non-commissioned officer—think of that, Lucy! Now, Lucy, confess—were it not far better to remain single all your life than to become Mrs. John Dobbs?

LUCY. I don't know. Single blessedness is all very well for girls between seventeen and eighteen—after that, it begins to grow rather monotonous.

MRS. C. Well, if the prospect alarms you, I'll resign Mr. Paternoster to you. (*smiling, crosses to* L.H.)

LUCY (*crosses to* R.) You're very kind—ha, ha! But here he comes! I declare the poor man haunts you like a ghost! I'll make my escape—a third person is always in the way! (*aside to* PATERNOSTER, *who enters* C.D.) Courage, brother-in-law—Courage!

Exit R.H.

PATER. Brother-in-law! She said brother-in-law! Extatic word! (*hurrying to* MRS. C.) Here—on my knees—let me—(*making an attempt to kneel.*)

MRS. C. (*smiling*) Don't trouble yourself to kneel.

PATER. Thank you. Between you and me, I'd as lieve let it alone! So my adorable widow has made up her mind at last?

MRS. C. I'm afraid I don't understand you.

PATER. Come, that won't do! You've fixed the happy day, haven't you?

MRS. C. (*affecting ignorance*) What happy day?

PATER. (*tenderly*) *Our* happy day!

MRS. C. Our happy day?

PATER. *My* happy day!

MRS. C. *Your* happy day?

PATER. Come, come!

MRS. C. Where?

PATER. Playful pleasantry! (*aside*) Rather a nuisance! (*aloud*) Then—in a word—have you fixed the day of our union, or have you not? That's my question!

MRS. C. I have not! That's my answer!

PATER. Ah, I see how it is, Ma'am! A week ago we were the best friends in the world, Ma'am—you hadn't received that wretched, contemptible daub of a portrait, Ma'am! I say a daub, Ma'am!

MRS. C. So, so—jealous, I declare! Ha, ha!

PATER. Don't flatter yourself, Ma'am!—only slightly purple with indignation at your sudden partiality for a paltry—plumber and glazier!

MRS. C. Ha, ha, ha!

PATER. Very well—you know the consequences, Ma'am—the law shall take its course—Paternoster *versus* Chesterton shall certainly go on!

MRS. C. With all my heart—ha, ha, ha!

SQUIRE. (*without*, L.H.) Zounds! mind what you are about—gently!

MRS. C. Papa's voice! What can have happened to him!

Runs to meet the SQUIRE, *who enters* C.D., *leaning on* JOHN.

SQUIRE. Don't alarm yourself, Mary—it's nothing worth mentioning. A chair!

MRS. C. (*to* PATERNOSTER, *impatiently*) A chair!—don't you hear?

PATER. (*takes chair from* R. *and offers it to* MRS. C.)

MRS. C. For papa!

PATER. (*places chair for* SQUIRE, C.)

SQUIRE. (*seats himself*) Thank'ee. Wheugh!

Exit JOHN C.D.

MRS. C. Now, tell me——

SQUIRE. It's soon explained. The fact is—somehow or other—I forgot I wasn't quite as young or as active as I was thirty years ago, so I tried to jump over a ditch——

PATER. And failed?

SQUIRE. Signally—fell plump into the middle of it!

PATER. Delicious! Ha, ha! (MRS. C. *looks at him severely—he checks himself*)

SQUIRE. However, luckily a young gentleman happened to be riding by at the time, who immediately dismounted—lugged me out of the ditch—put me on his nag, and brought me home.

MRS. C. Oh, Mr. Paternoster, run over to Canterbury for a doctor immediately!

PATER. Run over to Canterbury! Four miles there—and—about the same distance back again. Thank'ee!

SQUIRE. There's no necessity for that, for by another slice of good luck, my young friend-in-need turns out to be a medical man himself, and——

DOBBS. (*without*, L.H.) Now, be quick—get the bath ready—plenty of hot flannels—good rough towel—rub down well—then into bed—basin of gruel, with a glass of sherry—profuse perspiration—sleep like a top, and up again in the morning as lively as a kitten!

Enter DOBBS, C.D.

—(*to the* SQUIRE) Ah! better already, eh? I see you are,—wish you joy!

MRS. C. (*looking at* DOBBS) What do I see?

DOBBS. (*bowing with an air of polite reserve*) Madam, your servant!

MRS. C. It *is* he!

PATER. He? What he?—which he?—who he?

MRS. C. The gentleman I was speaking of.

PATER. Oh!—what! the painter—the plumber—— (*seeing* DOBBS'S *eye fixed on him*) I mean the talented producer of that exquisite portrait?

MRS. C. Which you called a wretched, contemptible daub!

DOBBS. (*to* PATERNOSTER) Thank you. Ha, ha, ha!

PATER. (*very loud*) Ha, ha, ha! (*aside*) He seems a good-tempered sort of painter enough! I'll give him another dig! (*aloud*) So you're an artist, Sir?

SQUIRE. An artist? Pooh! no such thing. I tell you, he's a doctor.

DOBBS. Neither the one nor the other, by profession—yet both, *en amateur*. I studied medicine, that my services might be ready if required—as in your case. (*to* SQUIRE) I studied the art of painting, that I might be able to secure to myself the recollection of features I might never behold again—as in your case. (*bowing to* MRS. CHESTERTON) Thus, you see, I am ready in either capacity to oblige my friend; and to prove it, (*to* PATERNOSTER) if at any time you've a quarter-of-an-hour to spare, I'll take *you* or your *leg* off, with the greatest pleasure in life!

PATER. Thank'ee! It's very handsome of you to give me the preference, but my time happens to be fully employed just now, and is likely to be so for a considerable period.

DOBBS. Ha, ha! (*taking out watch, and taking* SQUIRE'S *hand*) Pulse better already! Then I think we may dispense with the leeches to-night. Pity to waste them, though. (*to* PATERNOSTER) Perhaps *you*——

PATER. Don't apply your leeches to me, Sir!

DOBBS. Ha, ha, ha! you're offended—you look like it! (PATER. *looks indignant*) There's an expression! If you'd only keep just as you are till I run down to the inn for my sketch book——

PATER. Pooh, Sir! I say, pooh, Sir!

Enter LUCY, *hastily*, R.H.

LUCY. Oh, my dear papa! (*kissing* SQUIRE)

MRS. C. Don't be alarmed, Lucy. This gentleman pronounces the accident a very trivial one.

DOBBS. A mere nothing, I assure you.

LUCY. Oh, Sir——(*looking up at* DOBBS) Ha!

PATER. Now, *she's* beginning!

DOBBS. (*without noticing* LUCY'S *exclamation*) However, my dear Sir—(*to* SQUIRE) I shall still recommend the hot bath——

SQUIRE. Very well. Must obey the doctor's orders; so come along, Paternoster—lend me your arm——

MRS. C. (*impatiently, to* PATERNOSTER) Your arm—don't you hear? (PATERNOSTER *offers his arm to her*) For papa! (*very loud* —PATERNOSTER *crosses to* SQUIRE)

DOBBS. (*stepping in before him, and taking* SQUIRE'S *arm*) A trifle too late—ha, ha! (*he and the* SQUIRE *retire towards* L.H.D. —PATERNOSTER *crosses back to* R. *in a rage*)

MRS. C. (*aside to* LUCY) Why, Lucy, one would imagine you had seen this young doctor before.

LUCY. Doctor?

MRS. C. Well—this artist, if you prefer it.

LUCY. Artist—doctor? He's neither one nor the other. He is a musician!

PATER (*overhearing*) A musician? A mu——Here Squire— stop! He's not a doctor!

SQUIRE. (*going*) Pshaw!

PATER. (*shouting*) Stop! He's not a painter!

SQUIRE. (*going*) Pooh!

PATER. (*crossing to* L.) Stop! He's a mu——

SQUIRE. Stuff!

Exit L.H.D. DOBBS *politely sees him to door, then crosses to* C.

PATER. (*shouting*)—Sician—a musician—a mu——

Enter JOHN, L.H.

JOHN. Master's bath is quite ready. (*sees* DOBBS—*starts*) Eh? no —yes it is!

PATER. Now *he's* beginning! Do you know him?

JOHN. Know him? I should think so. Why he rode old Moonraker at our last steeple chase!

Exit L.H.

PATER. (*shouting*) Here, Squire—stop! He's not a doctor—he's not a painter—he's not a musician—he's a moonchaser! I should say, a steeple-raker! I mean, he rode old Moonchaser—I mean, old Steeple-raker, at our last moon chase! I mean, at our last steeple rake! Here, stop!

Runs out L.H.D.

DOBBS. (*aside*) Come, I've found my way into the enemy's camp at last. Egad, if they only knew who I am—(*looking at* MRS. CHESTERTON.)—and there she stands, as beautiful as ever! Pshaw—don't

let me forget that she has insulted me—humiliated me! Proud woman, it will soon be my turn. (*aloud*) Ha, ha! I really seem to have given your pugnacious friend some violent cause of offence.

MRS. C. Why your presence here, sir, has certainly caused a little excitement. Even my sister recognised you.

DOBBS. (*bowing to* LUCY) Your sister?

LUCY. Yes. I knew you again the moment I saw you. Indeed, it was only this morning I was practising that beautiful ballad you were so polite as to dedicate to me.

DOBBS. (*aside*) If she had known that beautiful ballad was composed by John Dobbs, it would have lighted the kitchen fire, or served as curl papers for the cook and housemaid before this. (*aloud*) At Bath! (*crosses to* C.) True—I remember perfectly. A most charming voice!

LUCY. And yet you had entirely forgotten me.

DOBBS. Nay, I never forget my pupils—(*bowing to* LUCY)—nor my models. (*bowing to* MRS. CHESTERTON) Indeed, there are features which so indelibly impress themselves upon our memory, that neither time nor absence can efface them. (*looking alternately at* MRS. CHESTERTON *and* LUCY.)

MRS. C. (*aside*) Does he mean that for me or Lucy?

LUCY. (*aside*) I wonder if that's intended for me or Mary?

Enter PATERNOSTER, L.H.D. *running.*

PATER. Wheugh! Here I am again! (*looking fiercely at* DOBBS.)

DOBBS. (*looking indifferently at* PATERNOSTER) I believe you spoke?

PATER. I believe I did—rather! I said here I am again: though I dare say my presence here is not very welcome.

DOBBS. Then the question very naturally suggests itself, why did you come? But you are quite mistaken—a good laugh is always welcome.

PATER. Ha, ha, ha! Very good—very smart, indeed! (*aside*) I've half a mind to say something dreadfully severe—only I don't exactly know how to set about it. (*crosses to* C. *aloud*) I am deputed by Mr. Fallowfield to say that he requires the presence of his daughters—both his daughters!

LUCY. Papa's not worse! Surely that's not the cause?

PATER. No; I wish it was. No—I don't mean that!—I mean——

DOBBS. You don't appear to me to have quite made up your mind as to what you *do* mean.

PATER. I'm not aware, sir, that I addressed my conversation to you, either individually or collectively. (*aside*) That was rather severe!

MRS. C. Will you explain? What is the matter?

PATER. Why our young friend, Mr. John Dobbs, is the matter?

MRS. C. Again!

PATER. Yes. Your worthy father was just stepping into his hot bath—very improper treatment, by the bye, for a man who obviously ought to keep himself cool——(*speaking at* DOBBS.)

DOBBS. (*smiling*) As you do.

PATER. (*violently*) Yes, sir, as I do;—well, he was just stepping into his hot bath, as I said before—very improper treatment, by the bye——

DOBBS. Yes—you said *that* before!

PATER. I wish you wouldn't speak, sir!

DOBBS. I wish *you would!*

PATER. Then the long and the short of it is——

DOBBS. Never mind the long—stick to the short!

PATER. I shall stick altogether, if you keep interrupting in this way! However, Mr. John Dobbs, Junior, has just sent a man to know if there's any answer to his letter, in which, as you know, he requested permission to present his objectionable person at Fallowfield Hall.

DOBBS. (*aside*) True enough! I gave the fellow half a crown to bring the message to the house, and promised to double it, if he got kicked out of it.

MRS. C. Was there ever such effrontery? Ha, ha!

PATER. A low-bred, ignorant farming fellow, who won't take a hint. But there are some folks who never will take a hint. (*pointedly to* DOBBS—*then aside*) That's another dig.

DOBBS. (*indifferently*) Ah!

PATER. And who will insist on forcing their society upon other folks.

DOBBS. Ah, very wrong indeed in some folks, and very hard upon other folks—very!

PATER. So your father wishes to speak to you—(*to* MRS. CHESTERTON)—on the subject of our approaching marriage. (*pointedly at* DOBBS) I say, our approaching marriage!

DOBBS. Ha, ha! Why address yourself so pointedly to me, my dear sir? If you want my consent, why don't you ask for it at once?

PATER. Your consent? Stuff—pooh! All I have to say to you, sir, is, that with so many professions on your hands at once—namely, a painter, a plumber—I mean, a painter, and doctor, and musician, and moonchaser—I should say, steeple-raker—why your time must be too valuable to waste here any longer, and so I'll just tell John to bring your horse round to the door immediately.

DOBBS. A perfect waste of time on John's part, as John will most indubitably have to take the horse back again from whence John brought him. I dine here—indeed, I'm not certain that I don't sleep here!

PATER. Perhaps you haven't quite made up your mind whether you don't live here altogether?

DOBBS. Why, if you insist upon it——

PATER. Absurd! (*crosses behind to* R.)

MRS. C. Come, Lucy——(LADIES *cross to* L.)

DOBBS. Ladies, I kiss your hands——

PATER. Humbug! (*advancing to* MRS. CHESTERTON *and* LUCY) May I be allowed?

DOBBS. (*stepping in before him, and offering his arm to* MRS.

CHESTERTON *and* LUCY) Permit me——(*to* PATERNOSTER) A trifle too late again—ha, ha, ha! (*handing* LADIES *to* L.H.D. *They exeunt*. DOBBS *crosses to* R.H. *humming an air*) La la la la la!

PATER. (*aside*) Now he's singing! (*singing very loud*) Do, re, fa, sol—(*crosses to* DOBBS, *singing very loud*)—fa, sol, la, fa, sol, la, do! (*re-crosses to* L., *and thumps piano*) Do, re——(DOBBS *throws himself on sofa, and reads newspaper*) Now he's beginning to read! (*advancing to him*) Sir—I say, sir——

DOBBS. Eh? (*looking at* PATERNOSTER.)

PATER. I wish to——that is, I——

DOBBS. Exactly! (*reading again.*)

PATER. Will you allow me to ask you a question—several questions?

DOBBS. By all means. Go on—don't be shy.

PATER. Ahem! Have you resided long in this neighbourhood?

DOBBS. No!

PATER. Do you intend to settle in it?

DOBBS. Perhaps!

PATER. As a painter?

DOBBS. Why—umph!

PATER. Or a doctor?

DOBBS. Why—umph!

PATER. Or a musician?

DOBBS. Why—umph!

PATER. Why—umph? I never had to encounter a more irritating style of dialogue—(*aloud*)—unless, indeed, you are not wha you appear to be! (*with intention.*)

DOBBS. Possibly!

PATER. Oh, then you wish to conceal who you really are?

DOBBS. Probably!

PATER. And you've your reasons for it?

DOBBS. Certainly!

PATER. (*aside*) I never heard such a limited vocabulary in m life! (*aloud*) Then, sir, allow me to observe that your conduct is, t say the least of it, suspicious. You are aware that there are tw females in this house, sir, young, rich, and pretty——

DOBBS. Ha!

PATER. Perhaps you've an eye to one of them?

DOBBS. Oh!

PATER. Which, sir—which?

DOBBS. Ah!

PATER. Is it the widow?

DOBBS. Oh!

PATER. (*aside*) I shall have a fit of convulsions presently—I'm sure I shall! (*aloud*) Then, sir, I'll be more communicative than yo are! Ahem! You must know, sir, that I'm a button manufacturer, o a large scale!

DOBBS. (*rises*) On a *large* scale? You allude to the buttons, I presume?

PATER. And I love the widow—I adore the widow—and if a riva should presume to present himself, why—dash my wig——

DOBBS. Wig! You mean buttons!

PATER. I'd send a brace of pistols through his head!

DOBBS. Bullets and all? Ha, ha!

PATER. I would—by Jove, I would! (*kicking chair over*

Enter MRS. CHESTERTON, D.L.H.

MRS. C. What is the matter?

PATER. You've come just in time. I was gradually getting into a passion.

DOBBS. And I assure you this gentleman's passion is no joke—especially for the furniture. (*picks up chair.*)

MRS. C. What does it mean?

PATER. It means, Mrs. C., that this mysterious stranger (*looking at* DOBBS.)—is'nt in the neighbourhood for nothing. It can't be to paint the inhabitants, for they're all ugly!

DOBBS. (*to* MRS. C.) That's gallant! (*smiling*)

PATER. I'm speaking of the male species, Sir.

DOBBS. (*bowing to him*) Oh, then, I perfectly agree with you.

PATER. And as for music—we've no ears!

DOBBS. (*smiling*) I'm sure you ought to have!

PATER. Besides, there's no opportunity for you. If you want to play the parish organ—we've got none!

DOBBS. No Parish?

PATER. (*shouting*) No organ! No, no—it isn't that that brings you here, Sir. You know it isn't—and unless I'm very much mistaken, this lady knows it isn't.

MRS. C. Mr. Paternoster!

PATER. Yes, Ma'am, I've my suspicions. That meeting at the County Ball, Ma'am; then the portrait, Ma'am; then the plumber himself—I mean the painter, Ma'am! The thing's clear—I've a rival!

MRS. C. Mr. Paternoster! are you mad?

DOBBS. (*advancing upon* PATERNOSTER, *who retreats* R.H.) And pray, Sir, let me ask you by what right do you interfere? I repeat, by what right——

PATER. Now, don't put yourself in such a dreadful state of excitement—don't!

DOBBS. If I have a secret, Sir, that's my affair, not yours. (*very loud*) That's my affair!

PATER. I hear you—but that's no reason why the people in the next county should! A secret? A declaration—to my very face—before my very eyes!

DOBBS. A declaration? Oh!

PATER. Don't let me have any more of your "Ohs!" Mrs. C., that gentleman or I must leave the house! Tell him to go, Mrs. C., or else——

DOBBS. Well, Sir?

PATER. Or else, as I said before, Paternoster *versus* Chesterton shall certainly go on!

DOBBS. Then Paternoster will certainly lose!

PATER. Pooh—absurd!

DOBBS. Well, I merely give you my opinion as an attorney.

PATER. An attorney? Damme, he's everything!

DOBBS. Yes, the case is clearly against you. *Vide* 2nd of George the Third, cap. 5, sec. 2. Besides, you remember the great cause of Grigsby *versus* Bigsby—parallel case entirely,—to say nothing of Hopkins *versus* Popkins. Indeed, the late Lord Mansfield, in the case of Hobson *versus* Dobson, tried before his Lordship at the Carrickfergus Assizes, in October, 1814, distinctly, positively, and emphatically said——

PATER. That'll do, Sir. I don't want to know what Lord Carrickfergus said to Dobson and Bobson, at the Mansfield Assizes—nor this lady, either.

DOBBS. Unless she condescends to request my professional advice.

PATER. Which she certainly does not!

MRS. C. Which I certainly do!

PATER. Very well, Ma'am! (*crosses to* L.C.) If you choose to throw away your six-and-eightpences, that's your affair. I'll go to law. I don't care about what your pettifogging attorney says—I don't care about George the Fifth, sec. 3, cap. 1814,—I don't care what Lord Jobson said to Bobson—I mean, what Lord Bobson said to—— Never mind! And as for you, Sir, allow me to tell you——

DOBBS. (*crosses to him*) What, Sir?

PATER. Nothing! (*runs off* L.H.D.)

DOBBS. Ha, ha, ha! Poor Buttons!

MRS. C. Surprise upon surprise! A lawyer?

DOBBS. Enough of one, at any rate, Ma'am, to offer you my services.

MRS. C. Really, Sir——

DOBBS. Unless, indeed, this proposed marriage with Mr. Paternoster is, in reality, less formidable than it would appear to be.

MRS. C. Sir, I——

DOBBS. At any rate he'll not easily renounce his pretensions, neither should I, were I in his place, although a refusal is not the most agreeable thing in the world! (*looking attentively at* MRS. C., *then resuming a gayer manner*) Come, Madam—what say you? Are you willing to shelter yourself under my legal battery, and see me blow poor Mr. Paternoster out of the water?

MRS. C. Sir, I really do not know——

DOBBS. How to act? Nothing so simple. Accept a consultation—meet me here in half an hour—(MRS. C. *starts*)—professionally of course!

MRS. C. Sir I——

DOBBS. Accept! Thank you. You will be *alone?*

MRS. C. Sir, I——

DOBBS. Agree! That's settled!

PATER. (*without*) Now, come along——

DOBBS. The enemy's in sight. Leave all to me. (*seats himself at piano*)

Enter PATERNOSTER, *pulling on the* SQUIRE *with him,* LUCY *following* L.H.D.

SQUIRE. Nonsense!

PATER. But I tell you it is——

DOBBS. (*plays the piano*)

PATER. Now he's playing the piano! (*to* SQUIRE) I repeat, that here, on this very spot, not five minutes ago, I distinctly heard——

DOBBS. (*playing and singing*)

"As I was going down de street, down de street," &c.

PATER. (*to* DOBBS) Don't play so loud, Sir. I wish you *were* going down the street! (*to* SQUIRE) I repeat, that I clearly and distinctly heard——

DOBBS. (*very loud*)

"And it's no use knocking at the door," &c.

PATER. Don't make such a noise, Sir!

SQUIRE. Hang me, if everybody in the house doesn't seem in a conspiracy to annoy me.

PATER. (*shouting*) Well, but, Squire——

DOBBS. (*looking round at* PATERNOSTER) Don't make such a noise, Sir—you disturb the Squire.

SQUIRE. I've had nothing but worry, worry, all day long. First, no one would go out shooting with me—then I tumble into a ditch—then in comes Mr. John Dobbs's letter——

DOBBS. (*aside*) Then Mr. John Dobbs himself—ha, ha!

SQUIRE. By the bye, Lucy, I told you to get an answer ready for this young persevering puppy, declining the distinguished honour of his acquaintance.

DOBBS. Persevering puppy! Thank ye, Squire—I owe you one!

LUCY. I'm sure, papa, I don't know what to say. I don't wish to hurt the young man's feelings.

PATER. Feelings? Pooh! Besides, he's not a young man—he's a farmer—so don't stand upon any ceremony with the fellow, Miss Lucy, but take my advice, and that is——

DOBBS. (*playing and singing.*)

"Take your time, Miss Lucy!"

PATER. Hush! (*very loud*) I repeat, take my advice, and that is——

DOBBS. (*plays and sings very loud*)

"It's no use knocking at the door," &c.

PATER. I wish you'd leave off that bang, bang, Sir!—you'll dislocate the piccolo!

SQUIRE. The letter must go, or we shall never be free from Mr. John Dobbs's persecution, that's quite clear.

MRS. C. I have prepared an answer for Mr. Dobbs, papa, and here it is. (*shewing letter*)

SQUIRE. That's right, Mary.

PATER. I only wish I could find myself face to face with this small son of a farmer—I mean, this son of a small farmer.

MRS. C. Nay, he's now a soldier—a hero—perhaps a drummer, or a corporal, with two stripes on his arm——

PATER, And two dozen across his shoulders! I don't believe this

fellow, Dobbs, ever was in love with *you*. Though your father might be a little involved, he knew deuced well the storm would soon blow over, and you would have a handsome dowry. That was his game, depend upon it.

DOBBS. (*suddenly coming down behind* PATERNOSTER.) Hold! Let me tell you, sir, that John Dobbs is an honest man, and as incapable of an unworthy action as yourself, or any other button manufacturer on a large scale in the United Kingdom!

PATER. (*aside*) Hollo! The mysterious stranger is getting into a state of combustion!

SQUIRE. (*to* DOBBS.) Heyday! Are you acquainted with Mr. John Dobbs?

DOBBS. Known him for years. We went to sea in the same ship.

PATER. Sea?—ship? Now he's a sailor!

DOBBS. In short, I may safely say we have never parted; and were I to suffer him to be calumniated in silence, I should be unworthy the name of a gentleman and a soldier.

PATER. A soldier? Only give him time, and I shouldn't be surprised if he turned out to be the bench of bishops!

DOBBS. I have to apologize for this interference in a family matter, but really my friend Dobbs's history is very singular—so singular, that, with your permission, I will relate it precisely as I had it from his own lips. (*they all look confused*) Don't be alarmed—I'll not trouble you with any unnecessary details, but come at once to that period of Dobbs's life when he first fell—or, I might say, plunged into love. (*looking fixedly at* MRS. CHESTERTON) The lady's name he declined to mention, but she did my friend Dobbs the honour of holding him and his in the most sovereign contempt. She refused, even, to see him. (*smiling*) There, I really think, she was wrong—for I assure you my friend Dobbs is by no means an ill-looking fellow.

MRS. C. (*aside*) He may have been very handsome—perhaps I ought, at least, to have seen him!

DOBBS. Well, poor Dobbs—who, by the bye, is one of the most obstinate dogs that ever lived—swore that the lady should be his wife. But it was not to be—she became the wife of another—a vain, silly man, as he heard——

PATER. I beg your pardon, sir, but that vain, silly man, happens to have been my cousin. (MRS. CHESTERTON *by signs tells him to be silent*)

DOBBS. I'm very sorry for it—but I'm telling a story as it was told to me. Well, poor Dobbs, finding himself unsuccessful in the Court of Cupid, determined to try his fortune in the Camp of Mars—in other words, he enlisted into a marching regiment.

MRS. C. (*aside*) Poor young man! He must indeed have loved me.

DOBBS. He joined his regiment in India—but before he sailed, he made one more appeal to the lady, who, in the mean time, had become a widow, but all in vain. He was again rejected—but this time the lady fairly lost her temper. By the bye, he gave me the lady's letter to read. I have it here, (*taking out a letter, and showing it to* MRS. CHESTERTON) will you favour me with your opinion of it!

MRS. C. No. (*aside*) He little knows I wrote it!

DOBBS. Well, John Dobbs at length obtained the summit of his ambition—a commission in her Majesty's service—and having returned to old England, he tells me he again means to lay siege to this obdurate lady. (*they all look at each other*) Poor Dobbs! another repulse, doubtless, awaits him. But I really beg pardon for this unpardonable intrusion on your time and patience, and in taking my leave, I beg leave to offer my thanks to you, sir—(*to the* SQUIRE)—for your kindness and hospitality to a stranger—to you, Ladies, for your condescension—above all, to you, sir—(*to* PATERNOSTER)—for the many hearty laughs you have so liberally afforded me, at your own expence! I now retire, merely claiming from one and all a little more indulgence and kindly feeling towards my absent friend, and comrade, John Dobbs. (*to* SQUIRE *and* MRS. CHESTERTON, *who make a movement to retain him*) Pardon me——

(*Bows and exit* C.D.)

SQUIRE. Well, that's what I call an extraordinary fellow!

PATER. By many degrees the most complicated individual I ever fell in with!

SQUIRE. Who *is* he? What *is* he?

PATER. What *is* he? You mean, what *isn't* he? I dare say I shall be in a minority, but it's my firm belief that this mysterious unknown is little better than he should be. He walks into the house, makes himself quite at home, then pretends to take offence at something or other, tells a cock and a bull story about his friend, John Dobbs, and then walks out again!(*shouting*) Where are the spoons?

MRS. C. Pshaw!

LUCY. Ridiculous!

SQUIRE. Absurd!

Enter MAJOR, C.D.

MAJ. (*slapping* PATERNOSTER *on the back*) Here I am again!

PATER. (*starting*) I wish you wouldn't! (*aside*) I thought 'twas t'other chap come back.

SQUIRE. Ah, Major—I'm glad to see you back again.

MAJ. I might have spared my ride altogether, for I found the matter rested entirely with the civil power. It seems that a highly talented and accomplished adventurer, after a succesful season in the metropolis, is now levying his contributions on the simple inhabitants of Canterbury and its vicinity——

PATER. (*as if struck with an idea*) Ha!

MAJ. However, the police are after the fellow. They'll soon have him.

PATER. (*shouting*) He's here—we have him! I mean, he *was* here, and we *might* have had him!

MAJ. Who?

PATER. He! him! our mysterious unknown, our interesting stranger, who's no more a painter, a musician, a doctor, a lawyer, a sailor, a moon-chaser, a steeple-raker, than I am. No, no—he's the talented adventurer—he's the accomplished swindler—

or else he's a policeman in plain clothes. In either case, as I said before, where are the spoons? (*during this speech* MRS. CHESTERTON *retires up, and sits at table, looking off*, C.D.)

SQUIRE. Zounds, Paternoster, your croaking has infested me. I begin to have my doubts about the young gentleman.

MRS. C. (*looking off* C.D.) Eh! yes—it is! I see him returning towards the house again. (*coming down* R. *of* PATERNOSTER) What can he be coming back for?

PATER. The forks!

MAJ. If my suspicions are excited, I shall certainly arrest him.

DOBBS. (*without* L.H.) Surely I should know that gallant grey?

MAJ. (*struck by the voice*) Heyday!

PATER. Here he comes—let's be firm! (*getting behind* MAJOR.)

Enter DOBBS, C.D.

—Now seize him!

MAJ. (*seeing* DOBBS.) Eh? no—yes, it is!

PATER. Now *he's* beginning!

DOBBS. (*to* MAJOR) My dear Frankman!

MAJ. Delighted to see you, my dear Captain! (*they retire up, shaking hands.*)

PATER. Captain! I can't stand this! I feel myself rapidly settling down into a state of incipient insanity.

MRS. C. (*to* PATERNOSTER) Now what have you to say for yourself, sir?

LUCY. You've made yourself sufficiently ridiculous, I think!

SQUIRE. You must admit you've rather put your foot in it!

PATER. (*in a plaintive tone*) That's right—don't spare me—kick me now I'm down! (DOBBS *and the* MAJOR *advance.*)

DOBBS. (*to* MAJOR) This is indeed an unexpected pleasure! Your pardon, ladies—but when I tell you that Frankman and I haven't met since we fought side by side at Moodkee——

PATER. (*aside*) Mookey! Where's Mookey? I think it's in Northamptonshire!

MAJ. (*to* DOBBS) But how the deuce is it I find you here?

SQUIRE. Oh, I'll tell you all that over a bottle of Burgundy. (*to* DOBBS) You'll join us?

MAJOR *and* SQUIRE *go out* C.D.

DOBBS. Immediately. (*to* MRS. C.) Mrs. Chesterton will not forget our consultation—business, of course, must be attended to.

MRS. C. Excuse me—I must retire——

DOBBS. And despatch your letter to poor Dobbs.

MRS. C. I confess, sir, the fact of his being your friend has in a great measuse removed——

DOBBS. Your prejudices? I mean, your dislike. Shall I tell him so?

MRS. C. Yes—no:

DOBBS. Then entrust the letter to me, madam—it will be precisely the same thing as giving it to him.

MRS. C. (*giving letter, and with hesitation*) You may tell him—that—I've no wish whatever to break his heart!

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PATER. (*coming down between them*) Exactly. Tell him we none of us wish to break his heart! Go and deliver the letter immediately. Go along——

Enter MAJOR, C.D.

MAJOR. Now, my dear Dobbs—are you coming?

MRS. C. Dobbs!

LUCY. Dobbs!

PATER. Dobbs! (*starts off* C.D. *and drags on the* SQUIRE *down to front, pointing to* DOBBS) Dobbs!

SQUIRE. Lor!

MAJOR. What is the matter? What have I done?

DOBBS. Been a little premature—that's all, my dear Major! So, egad, we must drop the curtain before the farce is half over. (*looking round him*) Bless me, how astonished you all look. Ha, ha! And yet it's no fault of mine. I never said I *wasn't* Dobbs, did I? And what if I am John Dobbs, son of old Dobbs, that doesn't prevent my being something of a doctor, eh, Squire? or having a taste for acting—(*looking at* MRS. C.)—or music. (*to* LUCY) Neither does it prevent my wearing Her Majesty's uniform—or above all, riding "old Moonchaser at our last steeple rake---eh, Buttons? (*giving* PATERNOSTER *a blow in the side.* PATERNOSTER *crosses to* L. *and* SQUIRE *to* C.)

SQUIRE. Egad, I begin to smell a rat, you young dog! Hang me, if you haven't taken us all in!

MRS. C, Yes, sir---your vengeance is indeed complete.

DOBBS. Nay, madam, I sought no vengeance---no retaliation. My motive was, I trust, a higher one---that of removing unworthy prejudices.

SQUIRE. And you've succeeded, as far as I'm concerned, for you're a damned clever fellow!

PATER. A regular trump! I never read the History of England, but I don't believe it contains such another Dobbs!

DOBBS. Squire, do you know this letter? (*shews letter*)

SQUIRE. Yes,---that's Mary's answer to——

DOBBS. Mr. John Dobbs, declining the "distinguished honour of his acquaintance"---ha, ha!

SQUIRE. Now, damn it, none of your laughing! Hark ye! if I had a dozen daughters, damme, if you shouldn't marry them all! (*crosses* R.)

DOBBS. (*to* MRS. C.) Shall I read the letter, Mary? (MRS. CHESTERTON *takes it, tears it to pieces, and lets them fall to the ground*) Thanks—Thanks! (*kissing her hand.*)

PATER. Holloa! Holloa! Very well, ma'am! you'll take the consequences. Remember, Paternoster *versus* Chesterton——

DOBBS. You forget Grigsby *versus* Bigsby, to say nothing of Hopkins *versus* Popkins—indeed, the late Lord Mansfield, in the case of Hobson *versus* Dobson——

PATER. Pooh! Pooh! But perhaps Miss Lucy will profit by the example of her elder sister——(*offering his hand.*)

MAJOR. I trust she will. May I hope?

LUCY. I capitulate! (*giving her hand to* MAJOR.)

PATER. Oh, damn it---I must marry somebody!

DOBBS. I'll find you a wife.

PATER. Will you? Well, it isn't everybody I'd trust---but as you can do everything——

DOBBS. Do you mean that? (*to the Audience*) Ladies and Gentlemen---you hear what he says? But you know there is one thing I cannot do without your assistance, namely---secure a favourable verdict for "John Dobbs."

SQUIRE. MRS. C. DOBBS. PATER. LUCY. MAJOR.

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